

CLAIMS

1. A messaging-enabled digital device comprising:

a messaging facility;

a user input facility; and

a graphical user interface comprising:

a plurality of graphical indexing elements respectively representing a plurality of messaging sessions being handled by the messaging facility, one of the graphical indexing elements being selected in response to the user input facility and the messaging session represented by the selected graphical indexing element being engaged;

a message history window pane displaying information from the engaged messaging session; and

a composition window pane displaying information for the engaged messaging session.

2. The digital device of claim 1 wherein the graphical user interface further comprises a pals list window pane.

3. The digital device of claim 1 wherein the selected graphical indexing element is visually distinctive from others of the graphical indexing elements.

4. The digital device of claim 1 further comprising digital memory, the graphical user interface comprising executable program components stored in the digital memory.

5. The digital device of claim 1 wherein the graphical user interface comprises executable program components received from a server over a network.

6. The digital device of claim 1 wherein the user interface comprises display components received from a server over a network.

7. The digital device of claim 1 wherein the pals list window pane, the graphical indexing elements, the message history window pane, and the composition window pane are distinct and spaced apart visual structures.

8. The digital device of claim 1 wherein the pals list window pane, the graphical indexing elements, the message history window pane, and the composition window pane are integrated into a visually continuous structure.

9. The digital device of claim 8 wherein the graphical user interface further comprises:
a pals panel, the pals list window pane being a feature of the pals panel;
a message history panel, the message history window pane being a feature of the message history panel; and
a composition panel, the composition window pane being a feature of the composition panel;

wherein the pals panel, the message history panel, and the composition panel are contiguous to one another.

10. The digital device of claim 9 wherein:
the message history panel comprises a pictorial representation of a generally rectangular document; and
the graphical indexing elements comprise pictorial representations of tabs disposed side-by-side in juxtaposition to one side of the generally rectangular document, the selected graphical indexing element being a pictorial representation of a tab projecting from the generally rectangular document, and the graphical indexing elements other than the selected graphical indexing element being pictorial representations of tabs abutting against the generally rectangular document.

11. The digital device of claim 10 further comprising a session command bar contiguous to the composition panel.

12. The digital device of claim 1 wherein the graphical indexing elements are disposed in proximity to the message history window pane, the selected graphical indexing element being visually integrated with the message history window pane and the graphical indexing elements

other than the selected graphical indexing element being visually divided from the message history window pane.

13. The digital device of claim 1 wherein the graphical indexing elements are disposed away from the message history window pane.

14. The digital device of claim 13 wherein the graphical indexing elements comprise pictorial representations of placards disposed side-by-side, the selected graphical indexing element being a pictorial representation of a placard having an enlarged shape relative to the graphical indexing elements other than the selected graphical indexing element.

15. The digital device of claim 14 further comprising:

a pals panel, the pals list window pane being a feature of the pals panel;

a message history panel, the message history window pane being a feature of the message history panel; and

a composition panel, the composition window pane being a feature of the composition panel;

wherein the pictorial representation of placards are contiguous to the pals panel, and the message history panel and the composition panel are contiguous to one another and separate from the pals panel.

16. The digital device of claim 1 wherein:

a first one of the graphical indexing elements other than the selected graphical indexing element represents a non-engaged messaging session having no unread messages;

a second one of the graphical indexing elements other than the selected graphical indexing element represents a non-engaged messaging session having at least one unread message;

the message history window pane and the selected graphical indexing element are displayed with a first characteristic to indicate the engaged messaging session;

the first graphical indexing element is displayed with a second characteristic different than the first characteristic; and

the second graphical indexing element is displayed with a third characteristic different than the first and second characteristics.

17. The digital device of claim 16 wherein a third one of the graphical indexing elements other than the selected graphical indexing element represents a non-engaged messaging session having at least one unread and recently received message, the third graphical indexing element being displayed with a fourth characteristic different than the first, second and third characteristics.

18. A computer-readable medium carrying computer executable components for multiple messaging session management on a messaging-enabled digital device, the computer executable components comprising:

- a messaging component;
- a user input component;
- a window pane component for displaying a plurality of graphical indexing elements respectively representing a plurality of messaging sessions handled by the messaging component, one of the graphical indexing elements being selected in response to the user input component and the messaging session represented by the selected graphical indexing element being engaged;
- a component for displaying a message history window pane containing information from the engaged messaging session; and
- a component for displaying a composition window pane containing information for the engaged messaging session.

19. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the computer executable components further comprise a component for displaying a pals list window pane.

20. The digital device of claim 18 wherein the selected graphical indexing element is visually distinctive from others of the graphical indexing elements .

21. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the computer-readable medium is a storage medium removably installable in the messaging-enabled digital device, the computer executable components being readable from the storage medium.

22. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the computer-readable medium is a storage medium permanently installed in the messaging-enabled digital device, the computer executable components being readable from the storage medium.

23. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the computer-readable medium is a network accessible to the messaging-enabled digital device, the computer executable components being downloadable over the network.

24. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the computer-executable components further comprise a component for displaying a pals list window pane as a distinct and spaced-apart visual structure.

25. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the computer-executable components further comprise a component for displaying the message history window pane as a distinct and spaced apart visual structure.

26. The computer-readable medium of claim 25 wherein the computer-executable components further comprise a component for displaying an additional message history window pane containing no information from the engaged messaging session.

27. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the computer-executable components further comprise a component for displaying the composition window pane as a distinct and spaced apart visual structure.

28. The computer-readable medium of claim 27 wherein the computer-executable components further comprise a component for displaying an additional composition window pane containing no information for the engaged messaging session.

29. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the computer-executable components further comprise a component for displaying the pals list window pane, the graphical indexing elements, the message history window pane, and the composition window pane in an integrated and visually continuous structure.

30. The computer-readable medium of claim 29 wherein the computer-executable components further comprise:

a component for displaying a pals panel;
a component for displaying a message history panel, the message history window pane being a feature of the message history panel;
a component for displaying a composition panel, the composition window pane being a feature of the composition panel;
wherein the pals panel, the message history panel, and the composition panel are contiguous to one another; and
wherein the graphical indexing elements comprise pictorial representations of tabs disposed side-by-side in juxtaposition to the message history panel, the distinctive graphical indexing element being a pictorial representation of a tab projecting from the message history panel, and the graphical indexing elements other than the distinctive graphical indexing element being pictorial representations of tabs abutting against the message history panel.

31. The computer-readable medium of claim 30 wherein the computer-executable components further comprise a component for displaying a session command bar contiguous to the composition panel.

32. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the computer-executable components further comprise a component for displaying the graphical indexing elements in proximity to the message history window pane, the selected graphical indexing element being visually integrated with the message history window pane and the graphical indexing elements other than the selected graphical indexing element being visually segregated from the message history window pane.

33. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the computer-executable components further comprise a component for displaying the graphical indexing elements away from the message history window pane.

34. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the computer-executable components further comprise a component for displaying the graphical indexing elements as pictorial representations of placards disposed side-by-side, the selected graphical indexing

element being a pictorial representation of a placard having an enlarged shape relative to the graphical indexing elements other than the selected graphical indexing element.

35. The computer-readable medium of claim 34 wherein the computer-executable components further comprise:

- a component for displaying a pals panel;
 - a component for displaying a message history panel, the message history window pane being a feature of the message history panel; and
 - a component for displaying a composition panel, the composition window pane being a feature of the composition panel;
- wherein the pictorial representation of placards are contiguous to the pals panel, and the message history panel and the composition panel are contiguous to one another and separate from the pals panel.

36. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein:

- a first one of the graphical indexing elements other than the selected graphical indexing element represents a non-engaged messaging session having no unread messages; and
- a second one of the graphical indexing elements other than the selected graphical indexing element represents a non-engaged messaging session having at least one unread message;

and wherein the computer-executable components further comprise:

- a component for displaying the message history window pane and the selected graphical indexing element with a first characteristic to indicate the engaged messaging session;
- a component for displaying the first graphical indexing element with a second characteristic different than the first characteristic; and
- a component for displaying the second graphical indexing element with a third characteristic different than the first and second characteristics.

37. The computer-readable medium of claim 36 wherein a third one of the graphical indexing elements other than the selected graphical indexing element represents a non-engaged

messaging session having at least one unread and recently received message, the computer-executable components further comprise a component for displaying the third graphical indexing element with a fourth characteristic different than the first, second and third characteristics.

38. A method of managing multiple messaging sessions graphically on a user's messaging-enabled digital device linked over one or more networks to other messaging-enabled digital devices in one or more environments such as peer-to-peer and client-server, the user's messaging-enabled digital device having a capability to receive input from a user and a capability to display information to the user, the method comprising:

displaying a pals list window pane to the user;
displaying a plurality of graphical indexing elements respectively representing a plurality of messaging sessions to the user;
detecting the user's selection of one of the graphical indexing elements in accordance with input from the user;
designating the messaging session represented by the selected graphical indexing element as an engaged messaging session in response to the detecting step;
displaying a message history window pane relating to the engaged messaging session using the display capability of the user's messaging-enabled digital device; and
displaying a composition window pane relating to the engaged messaging session using the display capability of the user's messaging-enabled digital device.

39. The method of claim 38 further comprising rendering the selected graphical indexing elements distinctively from others of the graphical indexing elements.

40. The method of claim 38 further comprising:
displaying a plurality of messaging mode headings in the pals list window pane; and
displaying a pals list under one of the messaging mode headings in response to a user's selection thereof.

41. The method of claim 40 wherein the selected messaging mode heading is a one-to-one messaging mode, further comprising:

assigning a name to a new messaging session in response to the user's selection of a pal from the pals list;

establishing the new messaging session; and
designating the new messaging session as the engaged messaging session.

42. The method of claim 40 wherein the selected messaging mode heading is a one-to-many messaging mode, further comprising:
assigning a name to a new messaging session in response to a user input;
determining participants in the new messaging session in response to the user's selections from the pals list;
establishing the new messaging session; and
designating the new messaging session as the engaged messaging session.

43. The method of claim 40 wherein the selected messaging mode heading is a many-to-many messaging mode, further comprising:
assigning a name to a new messaging session in response to a user input;
determining participants in the new messaging session in response to the user's selections from the pals list;
establishing the new messaging session; and
designating the new messaging session as the engaged messaging session.

44. The method of claim 38 further comprising:
receiving a message;
establishing a new messaging session for the message received in the message receiving step; and
displaying an additional graphical indexing element representing the new messaging session.

45. The method of claim 44 further comprising:
detecting a user's selection of the additional graphical indexing element representing the new messaging session; and
designating the new messaging session as the engaged messaging session in response to the detecting step.

46. The method of claim 38 further comprising:

detecting a user's selection of one of the graphical indexing elements other than the selected graphical indexing element; and
designating the messaging session corresponding to the user's selection as the engaged messaging session in response to the detecting step.

47. The method of claim 46 wherein the messaging session corresponding to the user's selection is of a particular messaging mode, further comprising:

displaying a plurality of messaging mode headings in the pals list window pane; and
displaying a pals list under one of the messaging mode headings corresponding to the particular messaging mode.

48. A messaging-enabled digital device comprising:

means for establishing a plurality of messaging sessions;
means for displaying a plurality of graphical indexing elements, the graphical indexing elements respectively representing the messaging sessions;
means for selecting one of the graphical indexing elements in accordance with input from a user of the messaging-enabled digital device to designate the messaging session represented by the selected graphical indexing element as an engaged messaging session;
means for displaying a message history window pane relating to the engaged messaging session; and
means for displaying a composition window pane relating to the engaged messaging session.

49. The method of claim 48 further comprising means for rendering the selected graphical indexing element distinctively from others of the graphical indexing elements to visually indicate the engaged messaging session to the user.

50. The messaging-enabled digital device of claim 49, wherein the means for establishing a plurality of messaging sessions comprises:

means for prompting the user of the messaging-enabled digital device to establish a name for a new messaging session;

means for establishing a name for the new messaging session in accordance with input from the user in response to the session name user prompting means;
means for prompting the user to select one or more participants in the new messaging session from a pals list;
means for establishing one or more participants in the new messaging session in accordance with input from the user in response to the session participant user prompting means;
means for establishing the new messaging session; and
means for designating the new messaging session as the engaged messaging session.

51. The messaging-enabled digital device of claim 49, wherein the means for establishing a plurality of messaging sessions comprises:

means for receiving a message;
means for establishing a new messaging session for the message received in the message receiving step;
means for displaying an additional graphical indexing element representing the new messaging session;
means for detecting a user's selection of the additional graphical indexing element representing the new messaging session; and
means for designating the new messaging session as the engaged messaging session in response to the detecting step.